



Hyphen 44

Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux
association sans but lucratif | autumn 2009



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The allotment gardens in Belgium

Alexander VERCAMER,
president of the Belgium national allotment garden federation,
president of the Flemish federation



Alexander VERCAMER

One finds the first information on the creation of a national Belgian allotment garden federation in 1896.

Officially the foundation starts however in 1927 when the informal grouping is transformed in a non profit making association.

Belgium is a very nice but as well a very complex country. It is a federal state, a kingdom with 10,4 million inhabitants (342 inhabitants per km²). Without entering into details as far as the structure of the State is concerned, I would like to draw the atten-

tion on the fact that the competences for territorial planning belong to the 3 regions: Flanders, Wallonia and the region of Brussels.

The local sections are always the basis for our functioning. On this level, meetings take place, information is exchanged and one tries to increase the membership. These more than 300 sections with approximately 50.000 members - from which 5.000 have a plot in an allotment garden site - are regrouped in ten provincial federations. Above it you find a regional structure. Every region has founded a non profit making association: Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels. Every region has its own function, its finances, its publications and its problems. The national federation constitutes the link between these 3 regional federations. The functioning of the national federation is very limited, among others because this institution does not receive any financial support from the public authorities. It is a place of meeting, of reflexion and dialog between the 3 regional federations. It is above of all the link of all our members with the International Office.

The expectations from the International Office are very high. Via this

channel we have to get access to the European Institutions in order to be able to achieve our aims better. This will one day be possible thanks to the support and to the strength of the 3 million allotment gardeners.

The European authorities should support the allotment gardeners for example with following measures:

- 1) Oblige the States to create a legal frame for the protection of allotment garden sites.
- 2) Recognize and stimulate the amateur gardening as a free time activity.
- 3) Stimulate an ecological gardening by the amateur gardeners.
- 4) Oblige the States to put sufficient plots at the disposal of the allotment gardeners.
- 5) Oblige the States to provide sufficient information on an ecological and sustainable gardening.

Our national federation has organized an international seminar in Ghent beginning of September 2009.

These seminars are a place and an occasion for the different national federations to make together a brainstorming and to develop a strategy for the future.



Decision protocol of the general assembly held in Ghent on September 6th, 2009

Were represented: the federations of Austria, France, Germany, Great-Britain, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and Switzerland.

Were absent: the federations of Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, Norway and Sweden.

1) The agenda is adopted with unanimity.

2) The reports of the statutory general assembly held in Luxembourg are adopted with unanimity.

3) The delegates decide with unanimity to award the diploma for an ecological gardening to the association in Craon (France) and the association of Västerviks (Sweden)

4) After having analyzed the explanatory documents and the intermittent report it is decided with unanimity to financially support with 5.000 € the French project concerning a survey about the amount of fruit and vegetables produced in an allotment garden and the savings resulting from this self-production.

5) It is decided that the Office will pay a lime-tree to be planted at the occasion of the European Day of the Garden in Bremen in June 2010. It will cost 2.500 €. This lime-tree will be planted next to the town hall of Bremen.

The activities to give a European character to the Day of the Garden in Bremen are decided with unanimity. Speeches by the Office representatives and all the federations as well as the awarding of diplomas for an ecological gardening are planned.

It is acknowledged that all the federations that take part in this general assembly will send delegates to Bremen.

6) It is decided that the answers of the questionnaire for the elaboration of a new information brochure have to be sent to the general secretariat before November 1st.

7) It is acknowledged that the Austrian federation will make a survey on the biodiversity in the allotment gardens on basis of the documents and according to the criteria fixed for the survey made in Germany.

The Swedish federation has informed in writing that it plans to make such a survey on the biodiversity in specific allotment garden sites chosen throughout the country.

8) The federations decide with unanimity to make a common project consisting in a survey of innovative projects realized in all the countries affiliated to the International Office. The federations consider that this is an excellent

measure to dynamize our movement and to present it to the public in an optimal way. The executive board has to work out the practical details.

9) The federations decide with unanimity to sign a resolution to support the Swiss federation during this seminar. The presented draft should still be completed by the inclusion of the town planning aspect of the allotment gardens.

10) The federations are informed on the affiliation fees for 2010. The fees of 2009 have only been increased by the agreed automatic index adaptation of 2.5 percent. No decision is necessary.

11) The delegates are given the first information on the study session in Birmingham.

It is decided that the subject will be: "The future of the allotment gardens". The study session will be a preparation for the international congress in Copenhagen.

It is decided that during the first part of the study session the questions arising in the workshop in Ghent will be discussed. In a second part the federations should present innovative projects. One innovative project per country will then be discussed.

Resolution to support the Swiss Allotment garden Federation

The 14 members of the Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux, meeting at a seminar at Ghent from 7 till 9 September 2009, were alerted by the Fédération suisse des Jardins Familiaux to the fact that numerous allotment gardens are threatened by real estate projects.

- The Basle Central Federation is to have a new structure plan. This new plan envisages that 20% of allotment gardens will disappear in the coming 5 to 10 years in order to make room for the building of apartments and official buildings. This represents about 1200 plots.
- In the City of Berne, several garden sites are also threatened by apartment building projects and no provision exists for any compensation or replacement.
- In Romandie an allotment garden site will be eliminated at Lausanne Vidy and other sites are under threat in Geneva, even though in that city there is a waiting list of 700 names which bears witness to the high demand for allotment gardens.
- In the Berne region, the allotment gardens in the town of Thun have fallen victim to the construction of a new stadium. Since the end of February 2008, the area has been entirely cleared and the garden sheds have been demolished or sold. The association still exists, but it no longer has any land.
- In eastern Switzerland, a group of Gardens at St Gall is threatened by the construction of an underground shooting centre, with apartments built above it. Another site is threatened by the construction of a tunnel for trains because the construction of apartments is planned in this area. There exists

an allotment garden concept stipulating the provision of replacement grounds. These grounds exist but not always near the residential areas.

The Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux is scandalised by the fate being suffered by allotment gardens in several regions of the Swiss Confederation and calls on the federal government to oppose the scheduled disappearance of a large number of allotment gardens.

In response to the crisis which is afflicting the most underprivileged, most European States encourage the creation of allotment gardens.

In response to the energy crisis, numerous countries take an interest in the development of short supply routes, of which allotment gardens are one element.

In view of the reduction of biodiversity that has been observed, allotment gardens, as has been shown by the study carried out by the German federation, are a means of preserving biodiversity and enriching it in urban areas.

An ever-growing proportion of the population lives in urban areas, which are expanding ceaselessly. City inhabitants suffer stress. There is nothing like allotment gardens to combat this malady in our society. The contribution made by allotment gardens to the health of city dwellers has been highlighted by the work and observations of European, Canadian and American medical teams.

Gardening is also beneficial for older people who are depressed.

As a result of plots used for teaching purposes, allotment gardens offer schoolchildren a place to learn about and respect nature, a special place to make them aware of sustainable development.

Giving priority to real estate projects to the detriment of allotment gardens would merely worsen the living conditions and state of health of the inhabitants of the towns concerned. Studies showed that gardening is healthy. It makes fitness studios unnecessary.

Allotment gardens must be regarded as the green lungs of cities. Cities really need them. It is impossible to imagine cities in the future without green spaces, and garden allotments are extremely valuable in economic, social, ecological, town-planning and health terms.

If, on public-interest grounds, which we can understand, it is sometimes necessary to do away with an allotment garden site, the local authorities must make every effort, at the very least, to replace the plots that have been lost and their facilities. This is the rule that applies in most other European countries.

The Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux asks the Swiss Confederal Government and the political leaders of the various regions to review their position and to do everything to, at least, preserve the existing allotment gardens and, if possible, expand their number in order to respond to the needs of the Swiss population.

Ghent,
September 9th, 2009

For :		
Austria	Zentralverband der Kleingärtner und Siedler Österreich	President: Wilhelm WOHATSCHEK
Belgium	Ligue Nationale des Coins de Terre et du Foyer-Jardins Populaires Asbl	President: Alexandre VERCAMER
Danmark	Kolonihaveforbundet for Danmark	President: Preben JACOBSEN
Finlande	Suomen Siirtolapuutarhaliitto ry	President: Liisa VASAMA
France	Fédération Nationale des Jardins Familiaux et Collectifs	President: Hervé BONNAVAUD
Germany	Bundesverband Deutscher Gartenfreunde	President: Achim FRIEDRICH
Great-Britain	The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Ltd.	President: Allan REES
Luxembourg	Ligue Luxembourgeoise du Coin de Terre et du Foyer	President: Jean KIEFFER
Netherlands	Algemeen Verbond van Volkstuinders Verenigingen in Nederland	President: Chris ZIJDEVELD
Norway	Norsk Kolonihageforbund	President: John Ove TOLLESHAUG
Poland	Polski Związek Działkowców	Vice-President: Wincenty KULIK
Slovakia	Slovenský Zväz Záhradkárov - Republikový Výbor	President: Ivan HRICOVSKY
Sweden	Svenska Förbundet för Koloniträd-Gardar och Fritidsbyar	President: Lars OSCARSON
Switzerland	Fédération suisse des Jardins Familiaux	President: Walter SCHAFFNER
Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux		Secretary general: Malou WEIRICH



Visit of the allotment garden site in Sint-Amandsberg



Alexandre VERCAMER, president of the Belgian federation, welcomes the delegates



Preben JACOBSEN, president of the International Office, declares the seminar open



The delegates



Prof. Ivan HRICOVSKY & Dr. Ole PAULEN lecture on the topic : Ancient and new species of resistant apples for the gardens in Europe



Ake TRUEDSSON lectures on the creation of new and better seeds



Prof. Marc de CLERCQ lectures on the topic: Environment and free market: Friends or enemies



Dinner and moments of fellowship in the restaurant « Pakhuis » in Ghent



Visit of the European Parliament in Brussels





Ivan HRICOVSKY signs the resolution to support the Swiss federation



Preben JACOBSEN & Malou WERICH give the signed resolution to Walter SCHAFFNER



Achim FRIEDRICH proposes to the delegates to discuss and to put into practice the conclusions of the seminar on national level



Norbert FRANKE draws the conclusions from workshop I (environment)



Sylvia WOHATSCHEK draws the conclusions from workshop II (the future of the allotment gardens)



Awarding of the diploma for an ecological gardening to the association of Craon



Awarding of the diploma for an ecological gardening to the association of Västerviks



Wilhelm WOHATSCHEK, Malou WEIRICH, Preben JACOBSEN, Peter van BOSSUYT, representative of the Flemish Minister for Environment



Peter van BOSSUYT presents the message of the Flemish Minister for environment protection to the delegates



Wilhelm WOHATSCHEK presents the general conclusions of the seminar



Preben JACOBSEN closes the seminar

The inclusion of allotment gardens in the urban planning documents in France

Jérôme CLEMENT, director of the French federation

The inclusion of allotment gardens in urban planning documents has always been at the forefront of the concerns of the allotment garden associations. The call to include specific sites for allotment gardens in urban plans emerged at an early stage of the history of the movement (in particular, at the 1927 Congress). It featured formally for the first time in a draft law dated 17 February 1950 but had to be withdrawn because of an opposition by the Minister for Reconstruction. It was only in 1976 that allotment gardens were given legal recognition in the land use plan (municipal urban planning document - POS), under the law of 31 December 1976 on the reform of urban planning.

The 1976 law

Article L 123 -1(9) of the town-planning code stipulated that the allotment gardens should be taken into consideration in the drawing up of land use plans. This provision stipulated that 'land use plans may locate within urban zones cultivated areas that are to be protected and may not be built on notwithstanding the facilities which serve them.'

Article R 123-18 adds that 'maps and plans must show the urban zones (...) and possibly within those zones the location of cultivated areas that under Article L 123 - 1(9) are to be protected and may not be built on.'



Allotment garden site near Dijon

Nevertheless, there was nothing to prevent allotments from being sited in other zones (including agricultural zones). And, in practice, many planning documents of that time reserved space for allotment gardens mainly in nature or agricultural zones. However, in urban areas the decision on reserving space for allotments was left to the discretion of the municipalities that sometimes granted the requests of associations but at other times did not.

The Law on Solidarity and Urban Renewal 2000 (SRU)

Law No 2000-1208 on Solidarity and Urban Renewal of 13 December 2000 (SRU-Law), with 209 articles including more than 50 dealing with planning law, has very significantly changed the existing law, especially in regard to urban planning documents. Local Town Plans (PLU) are thus superseding land use plans (POS).

The SRU-Law seeks to provide a new legal framework for land develop-



Allotment garden site near Dijon

ment policies in order to ensure that development and urban renewal are more consistent, and show greater solidarity and sustainability. This new law has 3 major objectives: to master the challenges of urban planning, to improve living conditions, and to provide for a genuine coordination of transport systems.

This new law should be favourable to our allotment garden groups because it is specified that the initiators and designers of urban planning documents must endeavour to follow:

- the principles of ensuring a balance between urban and rural development, preserving the spaces allocated to agricultural activities and protecting natural areas and landscapes
- the principle of respect for the environment which in particular entails a frugal use of space and control of city sprawl...

In order to implement these objec-

tives and principles, the law renews the tools of urban planning. For example, it establishes the Scheme for Territorial Cohesion (S. C. O.T).

S.C.O.T. is an intercity planning document which allows for the setting of general guidelines for the organization of space. It is binding on other urban plans and therefore on the local town plans (P.L.U.). The latter propose a project-based system of town planning: they are more the instruments of urban renewal than of the mere peripheral extension of cities. Furthermore, they must integrate both new mechanisms for consultation with the public, and also take into account new concerns, such as city travel, the organization of commerce.... At the same time they must be incorporated within a sustainable planning and development structure.

Like the P.O.S. the P.L.U. is a document of a regulatory character which defines the rules and servitudes governing land use and, especially,

building. The P.L.U. is drawn up on the initiative and under the responsibility of the municipality. It must be compatible with higher-ranking documents for urban development and planning such as the S. C. O. T.

The P.L.U. defines the zones as in the P.O.S. but there are now only 4 types :

- urban zones – U;
- zones to be urbanized – AU;
- agricultural zones – A – covering the parts of the municipal area to be protected owing to the high quality of the agricultural land;
- nature and forest zones – N, covering all the areas protected from urbanization. However, certain structures (e.g. garden shelters) may be authorized provided they do not detract from the character of the zone.

As in the past, our groups of allotment gardens are to be found under the areas designated A or N above. But this is not without problems, given the current momentum for the creation of allotment gardens in city-centre neighbourhoods, even adjacent to buildings. Municipalities do not generally seek specifically to protect these gardens; the land costs in the city center are certainly the main reason. However, nowadays these gardens are only very rarely threatened owing to their popularity. But a reversal in trend (e.g. a decline in the attraction of allotment gardens) could have serious consequences for the movement; all the more so since the local municipalities are often the land owners ...

The role of the associations in the inclusion of allotment gardens in planning documents is essential. It is also provided for by the law. Thus, Articles L 300-2 and R 123-8 of the Code of Town Planning specify that local organizations, approved nature-protection associations, and associations responsible for development and planning, can all ask to be consulted and to participate in this way in the procedure amending the local Plan (P.L.U.)



**Allotment garden site „Zukunft auf der Schmelz“
15th administrative subdivision in Vienna**

The inclusion of allotment gardens in the urban planning documents in Austria

Wilhelm WOHATSCHEK, president of the Austrian federation

The following report reflects the situation of the city of Vienna while it should be noted that in all the Austrian federal states allotment gardens are integrated in urbanization and territorial plans.

As allotment gardens were already stimulated in the beginning of the 20th century by the authorities, it was obvious that they would be integrated

in the urbanization plans as the construction of garden shelters was also subject to a building permit.

During the 1st World War the provisioning of the population was difficult and in 1916 a decree entered into force concerning the “use of building sites for the production of vegetables and plants”. This led to the creation of war gardens. It is understandable that at this time and for these purposes

these gardens were not integrated in the urbanization plans. Many of these garden sites subsisted after the end of the 1st World War yet without being authorized. As politicians considered the elimination of these sites as a social deprivation, this situation remained unchanged for a long time. Some of the sites were meanwhile integrated into the urbanization plans. A similar evolution occurred yet with

another dimension during the 2nd World War and in the time thereafter. Harvesting land sites (Ernteländchen) were created which were similar to allotment gardens and their movement was integrated in the allotment garden federation.

Some of these sites were reconverted into building land in the beginning of the 70ies while others were integrated in the urbanization plans. For many of these sites the terms "temporary use as allotment gardens" were created and this use was restricted to 10 years. These gardens however were not taken into consideration in the urbanization plans and the situation subsisted for quite some time thereafter. In the 2nd half of the 80ies, politicians had the will to establish a concept for the future of allotment gardens.

This planning is based on two major tools:

1. The urbanization plan, which is to be reviewed every 10 years and which determines the use of areas in accordance with urban requirements. This plan also enumerates the areas allocated for the creation of new allotment gardens.
2. The territorial and building plans, which determine the type of use of the land including the areas to be used as allotment gardens.

As towards the end of the 80ies the urbanization plan for Vienna was to be reviewed, politicians asked for the establishment of an "allotment garden concept" to be integrated subsequently into the urbanization plan. Within the frame of this concept, all allotment garden sites in Vienna were checked and either confirmed as such or, for sites that had not yet been integrated in the urbanization plans (which were about 45% of all allotment gardens) recommendations were issued as to their maintaining or re-allocation.

This allotment garden concept for Vienna was voted on 25 March 1988 by the Communal Board of Vienna and gradually implemented. With the

exception of a few allotment garden sites all sites were given the status of "recreation area-allotment garden" and legally secured under public law. In the areas inscribed in the plans for new allotment garden sites, about 2000 new gardens could be created.

As of that time, all allotment garden sites are included in the urbanization and territorial plans.

In conclusion it is possible to point out that in the countries where politicians have a positive attitude towards the allotment garden movement, the inclusion of these gardens in urbanization plans leads inevitably to their legal protection under public law.



Netherlands: Environmental strength of allotment gardeners

Chris ZIJDEVELD, President of the Dutch allotment garden federation

Awareness of our environmental impact seems to be growing everywhere.

People are concerned about energy use, pollution and loss of biodiversity.

But nobody seems to realise that allotment gardeners could be a striking example of people with a lower environmental impact, a sound lifestyle and contributors to conservation of biodiversity. Many allotment gardeners grow their own fruit and vegetables and are aware of „living with the seasons“. So the ingredients for their meals are not grown in a far away country and flown in from long distance. Instead they bring them home on their bicycle and are aware of our annual cycle.

And many of them even grow their vegetables in an ecological way. Not applying chemical warfare with nature, but instead using nature forces and mechanisms in order to harvest their fruit and vegetables.

In many cases allotment gardeners have their holidays on their allotments. Not driving, or even worse flying, long distances to their holiday destinations, but instead walking or cycling to their little allotment house and staying there for several weeks.

More and more allotments share their community building with their neighbours, whilst the allotment area provides a nature experience to citizens in densely populated cities.

And there is an increasing amount of allotments where ecological gardening is the rule. The results can be more variety in birds, insects and other living beings, thus reinforcing biodiversity. In some countries there are active groups on allotments that keep old and different species of plants alive, a further contribution to biodiversity and counterbalancing the activities of international chemical giants like Monsanto, who manipulate plants in such a way that gardeners are not able to produce their own seeds from them any more.

Allotment gardeners are contributing much more to a sound environment than most of them are aware of!

Germany: The sensitization of children for nature

Theresia THEOBALD, director of the German federation



these visits of the allotment gardeners the schoolboys/girls will get a practical biology lesson in nature.

3) The German federation represented by Frank MÜLLER is member



The German federation organises since years activities to sensitize children for nature.

The following activities can be mentioned:

1) The theme of the « Day of the Garden » on June 14, 2009 was: « Generation allotment garden – relax, learn, play ». The most important aspect was the education of children for nature.

During the central ceremony in Reichenbach/Saxony the federation had organised many lectures concerning the education of children for nature (f. ex. garden to taste ; granting of prizes for school gardens in Saxony ; green classroom)

2) The education for nature is the central subject of the federal horticultural exhibition in Schwerin in 2009. Specific visits of school classes are organised. During

on federal level of a workshop: «The school gardens». This group deals with the question of school-gardens on federal level. The allotment garden associations make an important contribution in this field. In fact they have created a school-garden in nearly every site. By designating competent allotment gardeners the school-gardens are as well cared for during the school holidays. All over the Republic you find numerous gardens for nurseries



and school-gardens. The German federation does not know their exact number. In the federation in Bremen alone you find 20 plots used as school-gardens. A very remarkable example is the school garden of the allotment garden association "OST e.V." in the town of Makranstedt.

- 4) With the FlorAtrium the federation of Bremen administers an advisory centre with 5.000 m2 of education and trial gardens. It is open for every allotment gardener and every interested person. Together with a trained pedagogical person it offers a « biology lesson in the garden ». 20 different school classes take part in it.
- 5) In Saxony and in Brandenburg competitions for school-gardens are organised. School-gardens situated on allotment garden sites take as well part in this competition.
- 6) Within the horticultural exhibition in Oranienburg a concept for sensitising children for nature and for a « green classroom » has been

initiated.

- 7) The German „Schreberjugend“ (youth movement) deals increasingly with activities sensitising children for nature. Since years you find in Berlin the « House of Sun ». It has a garden with a shed and is integrated in a project destined to young people that are socially less well off. The “Schreberjugend” has started an additional project in Saxony.
- 8) The review of the German federation «DER FACHBERATER» has mainly dealt in its May issue with the subject on the sensitisation for nature.
- 9) With the flyer « Happiness in the garden » the German federation has for the first time issued a specific documentation for children.
- 10) For the first time the German federation makes a survey of the most innovative allotment garden projects.
- 11) In Germany one has introduced the school system where lessons



are organized all over the day. This gives the German federation the opportunity to take advantage of the afternoon in order to organize activities to sensitise children for nature and to use the school-gardens laid out in the allotment garden sites.

allotment garden site in Sint-Niklaas

Belgium: The allotment gardens in Flanders (2nd part)

Study initiated by president Alexandre VERCAMER and by secretary general Noël GHESQUIERE

The ecological dimension

Allotments also have a potentially high ecological value given that they contribute to increased planting, assist in helping to preserve old trees and the fact that the gardening methods used are often eco-friendly. Specifically, allotments help maintain genetic diversity by the cultivation of older species of arable crops.

At a more abstract level, allotments also play a role in shortening the food chain and reducing the number of food transport kilometres.

The profit which can be obtained from crop yields compared to current retail prices is between 1.000 and 2.000 € per annum (from a conversation with Mr Piet Bausmans of VZW Volkstuinen in the district of Deurne).

The future

Various social trends are likely to make allotment parks even more important in the future. Firstly, the population's sociological profile (increased aging and immigration) and

time allocation patterns (more free time as a result of reduced working hours, early retirement and unemployment) are changing, which will lead to a larger potential target of users for allotments. Secondly, there is a marked shift on the property market towards more flats and fewer homes with gardens (due to rising land prices), thereby increasing the need for green space in general and allotments in particular. Thirdly, the trend in urban planning towards the development of green poles on the

outskirts of cities will also create major opportunities to increase the amount of land designated for allotment use.

However, allotment parks still remain vulnerable to pressure from more intensive forms of ground use, which means that effective measures must be taken to combat this. The study suggests three possible initiatives aimed at increasing the social return on allotment parks:

- 1) The use intensity of allotment parks can be increased by offering gardening facilities geared to specific target groups. Possible examples include: smaller plots for old people, school gardens for young people and raised gardens for the physically handicapped.
- 2) Providing educational and recreational amenities for non-allotment holders could also increase the use diversity of allotment parks, such as a collection point for pruning waste for local residents, a meeting centre and arranging school visits.
- 3) The external accessibility of allotment parks could also be improved by ensuring better communications with the surrounding area by means of cycle tracks and footpaths and by making allotment parks easier to reach.

A guideline for determining the need for allotments

Finally, the study attempted to draw up a general guideline for establishing the need for allotments in Flanders, based on empirical research. It uses three variables between which a statistically demonstrable linear relationship exists: population density per district; the relative density of allotments per district; and the importance of the waiting lists per district (i.e. the number of persons waiting in proportion to the number of allotments available).

The need for allotments was calcu-



allotment garden site in Sint-Amandsberg (Ghent)

lated for ten Flemish cities and came to a total of 95 ha (1). The additional need is greatest in the urban areas Ghent (+80%), Bruges (+73%), Mechelen (+88%), Aalst (+97%), Kortrijk (+74%), Ostend (+70%), Sint-Niklaas (+52%) and Hasselt (+49%). For Turnhout current provision is sufficient and in the case of Antwerp the current allotment provision needs to be increased by approximately one third in order to meet local requirements.

Text

David Verhoestraete, Grontmij

Hans Leinfelder and Georges Allaert from the University of Ghent's Department of Mobility and Spatial Planning

Websites

www2.vlaanderen.be/landbouw/
www.volkstuin.be
www.velt.be

Additional member info |
www.vvog.info

10. Policy recommendations

10.1 Sufficient provision

The present report reveals that both explicit and latent demand for allotments is high.

The method of calculation used allows us to determine the need for allotments for every municipality in Flanders and is based on population density (as opposed to population size) at district level.

The need for allotments was calculated for ten Flemish cities and came to a total of 95 ha. The additional need is greatest in the urban areas Ghent (+80%), Bruges (+73%), Mechelen (+88%), Aalst (+97%), Kortrijk (+74%), Ostend (+70%), Sint-Niklaas (+52%) and Hasselt (+49%). For the municipality of Turnhout current provision is sufficient and in the

case of Antwerp current allotment provision needs to be increased by approximately one third in order to meet local requirements. For Hasselt and Sint-Niklaas current provision needs to be doubled.

10.2 Anchoring allotments within urban planning

The report also indicates that 35% of the allotment parks may well disappear in the short or medium term as a consequence of the land use for which the surrounding area has been earmarked, for example, as a residential area, residential area expansion zone or for business premises.

On the other hand, however, half of all the allotment parks are located in zones where the overall land use designation does indeed appear to be compatible with allotment gardening (36% are situated on park land, 5% on agricultural land, 7% on land set aside for daytime recreation and 2% as 'small garden' land). These categories of allotments can be easily anchored within urban planning policy, in accordance with the regulations for 'small garden areas'.

10.3 Budgetary recognition

Allotments are not recognized as a function in the Flemish Government's sport and recreation policy, its social policy or in its nature policy. However, the report shows that allotments can fulfil an important recreational, social and ecological function.

Recognition of allotment gardening as a component of these three policy areas would mean that financial resources could be made available for refurbishing existing allotment parks and creating new ones.

10.4 Securing a higher social return

Allotment parks are in danger of disappearing as a result of the pressure exerted by more intensive forms of land use. In order to fully embed existing allotment parks into urban life, the social return obtained needs to

be increased. The report proposes three strategies for achieving this:

- Increasing use intensity by offering gardening facilities geared to specific target groups.
- Increasing use diversity by providing educational and recreational amenities for non-allotment holders.
- Improving also the accessibility of allotment parks by ensuring better communications with the surrounding area and by making allotment parks easier to reach.

10.5 Coordination centre at regional level

At present the Flemish government's input with regard to allotment parks is limited to subsidizing educational activities for adults organized by privately-run clubs and associations involved in allotment gardening. These subsidies are coordinated by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The report reveals that, for example, solely in relation to the single aspect of spatial planning multiple Flemish public authorities are involved, inter alia:

- The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
- The Department of Spatial planning, Housing policy and Land and Building Heritage Use Planning
- The Nature Conservation and Green Woodland Agency
- The Agency for the Promotion of Physical Development, Sport and Open-air Recreation.

In order both to streamline allotment policy within the overall context of how Flanders is governed and also with a view to the provision of information and services to associations and local authorities, we recommend that a fully-fledged allotment coordination centre should be created at regional level within one of the above mentioned public bodies. Given that this coordination centre would also fulfil policy preparation tasks, it should preferably be estab-

lished within one of the departments rather than as part of an agency.

The tasks of such a coordination centre could include:

- Coordinating the preparation and the implementation of the policy relating to allotment parks in various policy areas at regional level and ensuring internal consistency of content.
- Screening policy preparation and implementation of policy initiatives developed within various policy areas at regional level for relevancy to allotment parks.
- Gathering information for the purposes of providing services to local authorities, clubs and associations.

(1) The calculation was made for the two greater urban areas of Antwerp and Ghent and the eight regional urban areas which currently have one or more allotment parks already: Bruges, Mechelen, Aalst, Kortrijk, Hasselt, Sint-Niklaas, Ostend and Turnhout.

Germany: The biodiversity of cultivated plants in the allotment gardens

Flyer of the German allotment garden federation



1. Introduction

From 2003 to 2008, the Federation of German Allotment Gardeners (Bundesverband Deutscher Gartenfreunde), and the associations at state (Land) level organised under its umbrella, joined forces with the Department of Agricultural Biodiversity at the University of Kassel in order to carry out a survey of plants cultivated in German allotments. During the period between Autumn 2003 and Spring 2006, surveys were carried out in 18 out of the 19 Land associations, across all of the 16 German federal states. The surveys covered 62 German regions and 83 allotment locations in all, making a total area of some 50 hectares (123.55 acres).

2. Results

The researchers established the existence of 2094 species of cultivated plant, and were able to identify 1540

varieties. The species belong to 170 plant families, the family of Asteraceae or Compositae representing the greatest number of species in the allotments by far, analogous to the frequency with which it occurs in the botanical system. On average, one plant species was found per 17m² (183ft²) of the total area covered by the survey, which includes buildings and infrastructure found on the plots.

At 86 per cent, ornamental plants make up the largest group of cultivated plants by way of use. Twelve per cent, or as many as 253 plant species, serve to provide food for human consumption.

Vegetation scientists measure the occurrence of a plant according to its continuity and frequency. By continuity we mean the percentage of mapping units in which the plant oc-

curs. Frequency, on the other hand, is usually estimated; it is the proportion of the mapping unit covered by a particular plant.

The five most frequently cultivated plants are marigolds (*Calendula officinalis*), curly-leaf parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*), tomatoes (*Solanum lycopersicum*), redcurrants (*Ribes rubrum*) and lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*).

The following are also frequently cultivated: the garden onion (*Allium cepa*), dill (*Anethum graveolens*) and chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*), strawberries (*Fragaria x ananassa*), dahlias (hybrids of *Dahlia*), astilbes (*Astilbe spec.*), aquilegia (*Aquilegia spec.*) as well as the common privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*) and clematis (hybrids of *Clematis*). It is particularly striking that cabbages (*Brassica oleracea*) of nearly every variety and form are grown in allotments.

Thirty-one percent of all plants were mentioned only once, including some rarely-used cultivated plants such as the hyacinth bean or lablab (*Lablab purpureus*), or the archetype of the lentil (*Lens nigra*).

There are marked contrasts in the distribution of the figures for the various species across the different associations at Land level. These would appear to be the result of differences in the number of mapping units per Land association.

There is significantly greater plant diversity in allotments than in other urban green spaces or types of garden, such as city parks. A comparative study carried out in the Land of Saxony-Anhalt was integrated in this survey, and this study showed that more than 22 plant species were grown per 100m² of allotments, whereas 100m² of city park area merely yielded 0.5 species of plant.

3. Rare or neglected cultivated plants

There is no doubt that many species and varieties of cultivated plant, especially ancient ones, are being grown either rarely or not at all.

Within the past 100 years, some 75 per cent of all varieties have irrecoverably been lost. While it is true that new varieties are constantly being cultivated, it is also a fact that their characteristics are increasingly being selected on the basis of economic criteria. In allotments, however, there are many neglected or rare plants being grown:

Apium graveolens var. *Secalinum*

Leaf celery

Brassica juncea var. *juncea*

Indian mustard

Brassica rapa ssp. *rapa*

Turnip

Carum carvi

Caraway

Chenopodium bonus-henricus

Good King Henry

Dianthus plumarius

Common pink

Fagopyrum esculentum

Common buckwheat

Hesperis matronalis

Sweet rocket

Isatis tinctoria

Dyer's woad

Lathyrus sativus

Grass pea

Lens nigricans

Lentil

Linum perenne

Perennial flax

Morus alba

White mulberry

Nigella damascena

Love-in-a-mist

Pastinaca sativa

Parsnip

Reseda luteola

Dyer's weed

Saponaria officinalis

Bouncing Bet

4. Neophytes

Due to growth in international traffic and commodity flows, there is now a considerably greater risk of organisms being unintentionally introduced into areas beyond the bounds of their natural habitat range. The intentional movement of plants and animals for, say, breeding purposes is also on the rise. Such traffic and movements endanger native biodiversity.

The main danger posed by such invasive species lies in their suppression of native flora, but they also constitute a potential risk to health, as in the case of the highly allergenic plants ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum*





mantegazzianum).

Nineteen plant species that the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (Bundesamt für Naturschutz (BfN, 2006)) classifies as invasive were found in allotments. They include:

the butterfly bush (*Buddleja davidii*), Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), the Jerusalem artichoke (*Helianthus tuberosus*), the garden lupin (*Lupinus polyphyllus*), the Japanese rose (*Rosa rugosa*), Canadian goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*) and the common snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*).

5. Summary

Despite their modest share of the total area devoted to agricultural use

in Germany, allotments have great potential for contributing to diversity in the species and varieties of cultivated plants, which means they play a significant role in the conservation of agricultural biodiversity.

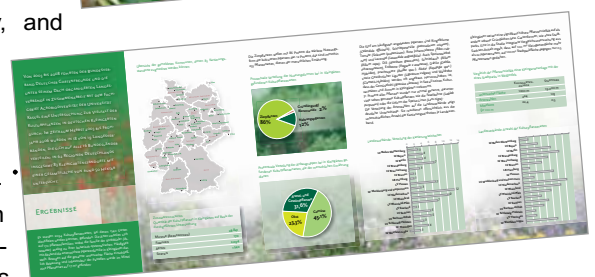
Moreover, allotment gardeners who cultivate species and varieties that are typically and traditionally grown in their region make a further valuable contribution to the conservation of biodiversity, and should be encouraged in their good work.

Last but not least, there are many ways in which allotments serve the way in which humans use biological resources. Components of biological diversity are put to use

in allotments within the meaning of the Rio Convention on Biological Diversity. Article 10 of the International Convention on Biological Diversity states that suitable measures should be adopted in order to foster and support this kind of use.

6. Summary

Allotments play an important part in sustaining agricultural biodiversity on account of the diversity of species and varieties in the plants cultivated on them. Greater plant diversity is to be found on allotments than in other urban green spaces, such as city parks. By growing traditional species and varieties that are typical of their particular region, allotment gardeners are able to make further valuable contributions to the conservation of biodiversity. They should be encouraged to keep up this good work. The Diversity of Species Project has been an impressive indicator of the fact that it is possible to raise the enthusiasm of a large number of people for an idea that serves the common good, and to get them to put it into practice on a voluntary basis. Allotments play a valuable role in the conservation of biological diversity, which is why we should guarantee their future existence. Appropriate measures should be adopted to encourage and support the allotment movement.



Japan: Allotment Gardens in Japan

In Japan, there are two types of allotment gardens

1) Vegetable gardens

The first type is the daily type allotment garden. The plots are about 30–50 m². There is no shed or hut. This type is common in urban areas

and is used daily. It is similar to the allotment gardens in the UK and France. There are about 3,000 sites in Japan.

2) Leisure gardens

The second type is a resort type allotment garden, and its plots have a

size of about 300 m². They have a hut where gardeners can stay. They are situated in rural areas and are used several times a year. They are similar to the “Kleingarten” in Germany, but vegetables constitute their main crop. There are about 80 sites.



1. Vegetable gardens

- 1 In Tokio
- 2 in Chiba-City
- 3 in Shizuoka-City
- 4 in Fukuoka-City
- 5 in Kobe-City

2. Leisure gardens

- 6 in Yochiyo-City
- 7 in Kasama-City
- 8 in Katori-City



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The Norwegians live on narrow strips of land along the coast, fjords and valleys

Antagonism or complementary in Norway

Audun MOFLAG, Ministry of the Environment Department for Regional Planning

People often claim that Norway is a small country. This is not true. In a European context, we are a big country – with a small population.

One would think that such a low population density leaves us with ample living space. However, with a few exceptions (like the central south-east) people live on narrow strips of land along the coast, fjords and valley bottoms. Most of the country is just wilderness and too rough for human settlement – too high, too steep or simply too far away.

In the past nature and culture were

complementary. Norwegians have been living in and by nature for thousands of years – subsisting on farming, hunting and fishing (like in many other countries). This is for example the case of the Vega archipelago – our latest newcomer on the World Heritage List.

The Vega archipelago is a cluster of dozens of islands centred on Vega, just south of the Arctic Circle. The archipelago reflects the way fishermen/farmers over the past 1.500 years have maintained a sustainable living. There is evidence of human settlement from the Stone Age onwards. Today the islands bear testimony to

a distinctive frugal way of life, based on fishing and the harvesting of the down of eider ducks, in a tough environment – nature is rather harsh and brutal in the north of Norway. This close dependency on nature no longer exists. Responsibilities and management are left to sectoral and fragmental bureaucracies.

Some examples

Despite our relatively spacious share of land per capita, there is harmful competition over some minor parts of the territory – for example urban sprawl into scarce farmland and recreational areas, development im-

pairing the coastal zone etc. Likewise, the quality of our urban development has received little attention. It is well below standard compared to that of other countries. One reason could just be that most towns and cities have very high quality surroundings – with easy access to nature and outstanding landscape almost everywhere.

Changes in agricultural production and the disappearance of grazing animals cause loss of landscape quality, the overgrowth of cultural landscape. The wilderness and mountain areas are increasingly being encroached on by various technical installations, new road intersections, power lines or recreational facilities – splitting up natural habitats and chasing away their fauna. Privatisation and commercialisation are obstructing the public's right of access.

In future the environment must be managed as a whole. Norwegian regional policy aims at promoting all the small and large settlements around the country – based on the local people, natural resources and inherent advantages. Therefore, the cultural and natural heritage should be obvious parts of the strategies for future development and change.

Culture and nature unite in the landscape

We should improve the landscape of our towns and villages and reverse the overgrowth of cultural landscapes in the countryside. Raising the quality of the local environment will make our small and large settlements more attractive both for living and business development.

Wilderness and mountain areas are likely to be of even greater significance in the future. The reputation of Norway as a provider of seclusion and tranquillity must be maintained. Designated areas are important for a number of reasons – from the preservation of biological diversity and landscapes to public health benefits and tourism. Today 10 % of mainland Norway is protected as national parks; by 2010 the intention is to reach 13 % - 14 %.



Oslo: our cities have very high quality surroundings



Norway has the reputation of seclusion and tranquillity

From a central government position, we are particularly aiming to :

- strengthen central government capacity and cross-sector management;
- collaborate closely with research and educational institutions;
- increase awareness among civil society, private organisations and public authorities;
- integrate landscape concerns into all relevant central government policies;
- identify how local and regional authorities may implement the con-

vention through local and regional policies and planning;

- improve participation by the general public (including indigenous people and ethnic minorities) and non-government organisations.

And in the complementary landscape approach, people easily become very enthusiastic.

Article published in the review NATUROPA no. 102/2004



Conwy Castle (Wales) : Conservation architects dislike vegetation, however attractive, growing out “their” buildings

Built heritage, natural heritage

Noël FOJUT, Historic Scotland

Europe’s historic buildings and archaeological sites represent not only a store of knowledge about our human past, but also a major asset for the conservation and understanding of nature.

Old buildings and ruins provide habitats not always available locally, offering protection to flora and fauna and creating micro-climates. Much of the available “natural” habitat in towns is built, and may even provide more “natural” circumstances – in the sense that nature is left to take its course – than heavily-managed parks and “urban green spaces”. In rural locations, especially where agricultural or forestry monocultures have reduced the range of habitats, archaeological sites offer “islands” of variety. In landscapes which have undergone extensive agriculture “improvement”, such

as lowland Denmark and Scotland, protected historic sites may preserve tiny microcosms of the past appearance of the wider landscape, and one is as likely to meet a botanist or a lepidopterist as an archaeologist.

Fauna and flora

These sites provide living space for birds, animals, plants and insects. Some, such as falcons, also inhabit a wide range of natural sites, but others, such as barn owls and swifts are now adapted to life alongside man. Like Strasbourg’s famous white storks, some species “nest urban but hunt wild”, whereas others, such as house sparrows, have converted to a life-style which is integrated with their human neighbours – in technical terms, they have become commensal.

Nor are these phenomena limited

to birds. Some species of rat and mouse are closely associated with human occupation. Urban foxes are a problem in many countries, while some can boast urban wolves and urban pine-martens. Many European species of bat rely on roof-spaces to maintain their geographical range, so all architects – working on new buildings or in conservation – have to be bat-conscious nowadays. Some national nature conservation agencies even employ specialist “bat officers” to work with builders. Reptiles, too, especially lizards, are among conservation considerations for the conservation architect or the archaeological site manager.

Plants, too, colonise buildings. Many specialised plants (which originally evolved on natural rock faces) live on walls, taking advantage of different



The urban built areas may even provide more « natural » circumstances in the sense that nature is left to take its course ...



... than heavily – managed parks and urban green spaces

aspects (sunny/shady, wet/dry) and also the presence of lime in mortar and cement. Mosses and lichens include many specialist species which are more likely to be found on buildings than “in the wild”. And of course, both “wet rot” and “dry rot” are fungi, trying to carry out their perfectly respectable natural function in an inconvenient architectural setting – as the old saying goes “a weed is a flower in the wrong place”.

Insects, too, take advantage of building spaces safe from larger predators, and also find food – preying on

each other, on plants and on human and animal waste. Some go beyond commensal status and are entirely human-dependent or parasitic. My favourite species name is a flea which occurs in the North Atlantic islands and rejoices in a Latin name which means “the skin-loving island-hopper”. Outdoors, snails favour lime-rich garden walls, which are “snail heaven” – calcium carbonate for shell-building, shade for temperature control, crevices to hide from predators and a ready food supply nearby.

Priorities to be decided

With the exception of a few “pest” species, such as fleas, pigeons and urban foxes, this all sounds like a “win/win” story. But of course there are occasions when conserving old buildings and ruins comes into conflict with conserving natural species and habitats, and priorities need to be decided.

Most archaeologists dislike large-scale planting of trees or even natural regeneration of woodland, because trees conceal ancient sites and their roots cause damage to buried deposits. But woodland can be managed to integrate these sites into clearings,

which have natural value, for example for deer grazing. Conservation architects dislike vegetation, however attractive, growing out of “their” buildings: roots exploit joints, which open up to allow water penetration, leading to structural failure. Perhaps most frustrating of all, for the conservation architect, is when (s)he tries to obtain matching stone to repair an important historic building, only to discover that the original quarry, now abandoned and overgrown, is a designated habitat – or even more galling, a protected site of geological importance ! Despite these occasional problems, responsible built heritage conservation agencies now recognise the natural, as well as the cultural, significance of the “built heritage” and follow the principles of “joined-up conservation” and “sustainable environmental management”. Also encouraging is the reciprocal interest of nature conservationists in the human aspects of their work, ranging from what archaeology can tell them about ancient species distribution and habitat formation, through to the importance of conservation in meeting the social needs of modern communities.

As the articles elsewhere in this issue make clear, the “bad old days” of single-focus conservation of only nature or only the built heritage are rapidly becoming a thing of the past – and for once, something we are happy not to conserve.

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Strasbourg's white stork nests urban but hunts wild





Different cultures contribute to the forming of local and regional identities



Climate and biogeographical characteristics that prevail for the most parts in Spanish territory are of a Mediterranean nature

Diversity of Landscapes: Spain

Florencio Zoido NARANJO, University of Seville

This application of the European Landscape Convention in Spain could result in important environmental, economic and social benefits. Spanish territory enjoys a wealth of different landscapes resulting from unique combinations of natural diversity and a great number of processes and occurrences originating from an intense history of different cultures and civilisations. With their extraordinary beauty, Spanish landscapes have contributed to the forming of national, regional and local identities,

knowledge of which has for centuries been spread throughout the world in literature and paintings and, in more recent times, by photography and the cinema.

Nevertheless, in present times Spanish landscapes are running the great risk of degradation and the loss of all their qualities. Despite the fact that appreciation for these landscapes is growing in some social circles and in certain public organisms and institutions, harmful processes and impacts

are much more operative. The main reasons for this negative situation are as follows:

- the climate and biogeographical characteristics that prevail for the most part in Spanish territory are of a Mediterranean nature, which gives rise to very fragile landscapes and ecosystems;
- the Spanish economy has been subject to rapid growth during the last few decades of the twentieth



Spain is one of the main tourist destinations



The Spanish landscape is characterized by an extraordinary beauty



Numerous different landscapes are to be found in Spain

century, leading to new land uses and a sharp rise in the consumption of natural resources;

- Spain is, moreover, one of the world's main tourist destinations.

Insidious processes and noticeable progress

If these insidious processes of degradation and unconscious alteration of landscapes continue, there will be grave losses. If, on the contrary, the current tendency is turned around, as should be the case for a European country that is aspiring to sustainable development, there could be highly relevant positive effects. Appropriate actions are taking place, but these should be more resolute and effective. Mention must first be made of progress made in gaining knowledge of Spanish landscapes. Work by the Autonomous University of Madrid and Evora University to draw up a landscape atlas of the Iberian peninsula has been funded by Interreg II and is well under way. There has also been more work devoted to gaining knowledge of landscapes at a local level in Andalusia, Asturias, the Canary Islands, Castile and Leon. Catalonia, the Madrid region, the Balearic Islands and the Basque Country, where typological studies have been carried out, regional atlases drawn up, and congresses, seminars and meetings held. Scientific interest in landscapes has increased significantly over the last ten years in a number of disciplines and universities.

With regard to administrative action, attention must first be drawn to the urgent need for the different levels of political power to define their functions vis-à-vis landscapes. The state administration should make use of the circumstances afforded it by the ratification process of the new European Landscape Convention to clarify the framework of responsibilities and powers as well as the legal framework in this regard. To this end, basic legislation in force regarding cultural and environmental heritage allows for further development.

At a regional and local level, there have been political reactions of great interest. These will without doubt be the decisive areas which will shortly confirm either the positive or negative trends, as this is where the greatest responsibilities and most effective means of control are concentrated. The Catalanian Parliament has already adopted the convention; the government of the Balearic Islands intends to include the convention's principles in a preliminary draft law; there has been a generous application of the legal term of protected landscape in the Canary Islands; in Andalusia the landscape is beginning to appear in periodical reports on the environment, in policies relating to cultural heritage and in instruments for town and country planning. It should not be forgotten, however, that these experiences are sporadic and are carried out, for the most part, without any legal support or requirement.

Main challenges

Nevertheless, the main challenges for landscape policies in Spain are social awareness and individual creativity, and the convergence of both. Despite the fact that, historically-speaking, there have been numerous and very important creative contributions made to land intervention and appraisal in Spain both by artists and by the people at large, at present the appearance of landscapes is changing with extraordinary speed in the absence of firm aesthetic canons. Social preferences during a period of massive access to new consumption patterns easily swing back and forth between a historicist pastiche and contemporary superficiality. In this situation, education and training takes on an important role in the strengthening of professional capacities and social claims for the protection, management and administration of landscapes, without which the trends towards greater deterioration will become more established. As the nineteenth century moved into the twentieth, Spanish writers and artists were able to highlight the values of the landscapes that they lived in on a day-to-day basis, but now, as a new century and a new millennium dawn, the great risk of degradation to which these landscapes are subject makes an intellectual reaction of similar or even greater significance an absolute necessity.

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Children's health and the environment

Maria José CARROQUINO, WHO Regional office for Europe



Public policies should seek to protect children from environmental damages

Children today live in an environment vastly different from that of a few generations ago. Economic development, increased urbanisation and the consequences of war in many European countries have added to the traditional environmental hazards, those problems associated with environmental pollution. Thus, while some traditional children's diseases such as diarrhoea, malnutrition and infectious diseases persist in Europe, environmentally-related illnesses due to environmental tobacco smoke (ETS), as well as mortality and mor-

bidity due to injuries, are increasing. In addition, the apparent increase in childhood cancer in some European countries and the potential risks of endocrine-disrupting chemicals are among the emerging health threats that need careful vigilance. Children of lower socio-economic status are likely to suffer disproportionately from all these health threats as a consequence of living in highly polluted environments, poor quality housing, lower levels of education, and of restricted access in environmental and health care services.

Children's vulnerability

The concern for children's vulnerability to environmental health threats is based on several factors. Children receive greater exposures than adults do because they drink more water, eat more food and have higher breathing rates per unit of body weight. Because they are undergoing rapid growth and development, toxicant effects at specific times may have irreversible consequences. For example, if vital connections between nerve cells fail to form during brain development, there is high risk that the resulting neurobehavioral dysfunction will be permanent and irreversible. Also, because most children have more future years of life than adults, they have more time to develop any chronic disease that may be triggered by early environmental exposures.

Public health threats

Asthma, injuries, and the effects of environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) are among the most significant public health threats to European children. Childhood asthma is increasingly prevalent in Europe, particularly in developed and industrialised countries. What causes asthma is not known, but several environmental factors, such as indoor air quality (particularly exposure in the house-dust mite) and ETS, have been linked with the increase in asthma. In addition, outdoor air pollutants such as particulates, sulphur dioxide and ozone can exacerbate asthma symptoms. ETS, especially smoking by the mother, is a



Children are threatened by a highly polluted environment ...



... by poor quality housing ...



... by increased injuries due to heavy urban traffic

known risk factor for asthma. ETS is also known to cause acute and chronic middle ear disease and is associated with sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

Injuries contribute to one-third of children's death under the age of 15 in Europe. The burden of deaths from injuries varies widely across the European region, with rates higher in central and Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States than in Western Europe. If mortality rates were reduced to the average of the European Union, nearly 32.000 deaths (31 % of all deaths) in the age group 1 to 19 years would be prevented each year.

Potential for prevention

The variation in asthma and injury rates across Europe and the evidence of the role of certain environmental factors underline the potential for prevention. Public policies should seek to avoid preventing exposures to environmental agents and considering children's characteristics and susceptibilities in the development of environmental health legislation. Promoting citizen awareness and participation in policy-making through education and access to environmental information are important elements in achieving a safe environment for children. In this context, children are not only consumers with rights, but also citizens who can play an active role towards their own protection.

International awareness

Several international agreements have acknowledged children's vulnerabilities and have committed their signatories to protect children's health from the effects of a deteriorating environment. This year, European countries will address several of the environmental health threats to children through international and national action at the Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health to be held in London in June 1999. It is expected that a large international collaborative initiative will result under the guidance of WHO and other international organisations.

Article published in the review NATUROPA no. 90/1999



In the eyes of the public, economic sectors i.e. transport and agriculture are often seen as pursuing interests that conflict with environment and health ...

Using economics to advantage

Laurent GILLOTTE and Xavier BONNEFOY,
WHO Regional Office for Europe

In the eyes of the public, the economic sectors – for instance energy, transport and agriculture – are often seen as pursuing interests that conflict with environment and health. They are the originators of pollution and often devise economic arguments to oppose changes in their practice that could improve environment and health. This behaviour has led the public, as

well as environment and health professionals, to view economic analysis negatively. However, these economic arguments are often inadequate and unconvincing from the point of view of many economists.

In fact, the economic rationale is bound to reflect as closely as possible the preferences of the population and

thus to take much greater account of environment and health. If used by environment and health authorities, economic analysis can be turned into a powerful tool for supporting their policies.

Why use economics ?

First, economics can help to make explicit the benefits of environmental

health improvements and the costs of the impacts. This provides additional arguments to encourage decision-makers to integrate environment and health considerations in their policies.

Second, current prices rarely reflect the full environment and health costs of the production or consumption of goods and services. Therefore, producers and customers have no economic reason to reduce the impact they have on environment and health, as they do not pay prices that reflect this impact. Nor are they encouraged to take it into account in their investment decisions and lifestyle choices.

This could be corrected by reflecting as much as possible environment and health costs in the prices. Economic instruments such as environmental taxes or tradable permits are a promising solution. A first step in that direction is the removal of subsidies that support practices harmful to the environment and health. In most of the cases, however, it would be difficult to remove distortive subsidies immediately and charge the full amount of environment and health costs. Nevertheless, negotiating plans and timetable to do so progressively, is a strong signal to the economic actors. It modifies their anticipation of future prices, as they know they will have to pay in the future for the environment and health costs they will create. This drives them increasingly to design their long-term choices and strategies in an environment-friendly way.

Finally, the setting of new economic instruments is usually under the responsibility of the Ministry of Economy/ Finance. It also implies negotiations with economic sectors. Therefore environment and health authorities will need to play a more pro-active role in order to advance the integration of environmental health in sectoral and economic policies. Success will depend on their ability to discuss and present economic arguments in support of environmental health considerations.



... They are the originators of pollution and offer devise economic arguments to oppose changes in their practice, that could improve environment and health.

A promising initiative

The present situation is that many environment and health authorities have few skills in using economic arguments and those economic sectors very often continue to ignore environment and health considerations. At the Third European Conference on Environment and Health in London, the Ministers of Health and of the Environment of the WHO European Region will make clear their intention to develop their capacities to carry out economic analysis and to place this tool at the service of improved environmental health.

International organisations – OECD, UN/ECE, UNDP, UNEP, the World Bank and WHO – will also be invited to strengthen their co-operation in environment and health economics. In order to sustain the policy changes promoting environment and health, cooperative efforts will aim:

- To support the development of the capacities of the environment and health authorities to use economic analyses;
- To improve the focus on health outcomes in national or inter-country processes dealing with environment and health issues. This will include the contribution of health expertise in these processes and the use of economic arguments to greater advantage;
- To exchange information early in the planning process of their respective programmes that use economic tools for addressing environment and health;
- To further co-ordinate their current and future activities in support of environment and health.

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